

and a system of relief and assistance that is based on marriage, on family, on work and on personal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, how is the welfare system hurting the poor? First and foremost, it is destroying their families. Let us take a look at this graph here on my left.

In 1965, Mr. Speaker, one out of 15 children in the United States, about 6 percent, were born out of wedlock. Federal and State welfare spending at that time was about 30 billion. Today the out-of-wedlock birth rate is one out of three. It has increased by six times since 1965. The welfare spending has gone up 10 times to about \$300 billion a year.

Welfare spending has not brought us a decrease in poverty, as I will show in a minute. It has caused an explosion in illegitimacies. The best social studies also agree. A controlled study in New Jersey showed that a small restriction in the growth of welfare benefits caused a 30 percent reduction in illegitimacy. And June O'Neill, who is the current head of the Congressional Budget Office, conducted a study showing that a 50 percent increase in AFDC and food stamps led to a 43 percent increase in the out-of-wedlock birth rate.

President Clinton has said there is no question that if we reduced Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and I am sure he meant substituting that with a different form of assistance for the poor, it would be some incentive for people not to have dependent children out of wedlock.

So history, social science, the President and common sense all agree: the welfare system as it is currently structured with its current incentives destroys families. It promotes illegitimacy by promising young men and women a measure of security and independence through a welfare package, but if and only if they have a child without being married, without having a work skill and earlier than they otherwise would. That means that the existing welfare system causes poverty, because, Mr. Speaker, work and marriage are essential to eliminating poverty. The best antipoverty programs are family and work.

I invite the House to look at the next graph. The red line in that graph shows the poverty rate in the postwar era. It has declined steadily all throughout that era until about 1965, when it reached approximately 15 percent.

The blue shaded area on the graph shows State and Federal spending on welfare since 1948. As the graph shows, that welfare spending held basically steady until about 1965, when the Great Society programs were started. At that time it exploded and increased by a factor of 10 times to about \$300 billion.

At the same time as we were increasing welfare spending by a factor of 10 times, the poverty rate actually increased slightly. It was a little under 15 percent in 1965, and now it is a little bit over 15 percent.

In the last generation, the Federal Government has transferred trillions of dollars to the poor. But the welfare system at the same time has destroyed their families and, therefore, their incentives to seek the American dream for themselves and their children.

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It is as if you are bailing out a boat with one hand while you were pouring water into the boat with the other.

Mr. Speaker, as we proceed through this debate on welfare we should remember two principles. The debate over welfare should not be about blaming the poor. It is the Federal Government that has perversely given material assistance to the poor on the conditions that they accept the kind of innervating spiritual poverty. We should not reform this system because people on welfare are abusing it, although that does happen. We should reform the welfare system because the system has been abusing people on welfare.

The second principle is this: Welfare reform shouldn't mean abandoning the poor. America must stand or fall together as a people with common ideals and aspirations. Welfare reform should mean bringing back the welfare system to reliance on those ideals.

My friend, the distinguished freshman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS] put it this way. He says that for the past 30 years the Federal Government has measured the success of welfare by how many people we could get on AFDC and food stamps and medicaid.

We need to measure success by a different index. Real welfare reform means measuring success this way by how many people we can get off of AFDC, food stamps and medicaid and into a life of dignity and hope. That is what the fight for welfare reform over the coming weeks in this House should be about. It is a fight that we can and must and will win for all of the American people.

ISSUES IN AMERICAN POLITICS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, let me just touch upon a few issues that are very rarely talked about in this Congress. We do a lot of talking about a lot of things but I am always amazed that sometimes the very most important issues that face the American people, the dynamics of our Nation seem to be ignored here in the Congress. So let me just touch upon a few points that I consider to be quite important.

Number one, if we are to understand the dynamics of American politics, it might be appropriate to understand that in the U.S. Congress today approximately 20 percent of the Members of Congress themselves are millionaires. And everything being equal, until we get campaign finance reform,

we can only expect that number to increase.

A democracy is supposed to mean that ordinary people can run for office, ordinary people can get elected to represent their neighbors back home. Clearly, there is something wrong in this country today when at a time that perhaps one-half of 1 percent of our people are millionaires, 20 percent of the Members of the House and Senate of millionaires.

We recently had a gentleman in California who took out his checkbook wrote himself a check for \$25 million in attempting to buy the Senate seat in that State, and that is happening increasingly. So if we want to understand why the policies of the U.S. Congress so often work to reflect the interest of the wealthy and the powerful, it has something to do with who is in Congress and who funds people who go to Congress.

Many of you may have seen in the papers that last month the Republican Party held a fundraiser. It was a nice little fundraiser. It was only \$1,000 a plate. It was a good dinner. Nice desert. It was a good bargain. The point is that the Republican Party on that night left with \$11 million.

Now, why do people go to a dinner at a \$1,000 a plate? The food is good, that is true, but there are other reasons and the reasons might be that they are not donating, they are investing.

Now, as the only Independent in Congress I would point out the Democrats are not far behind. They also have dinners of that kind. Wealthy people invest so that when this session, this Congress comes together, they vote tax breaks for the wealthiest people. They vote for trade policies which help large corporations export our jobs to Third World countries. That is a very, very serious problem. We desperately need campaign finance reform so that we can limit the amount of money that can be spent on a campaign and that we can really have democracy in this institution.

Number two, another issue that we don't often talk about is the very, very unfair distribution of wealth in America. Very rarely is that talked about. It is important to point out that in the United States today the wealthiest 1 percent of the population owns more wealth, not that bottom 90 percent. We have a situation now where the chief executive officers of the largest corporations in America are earning 150 times what their workers are earning.

Now, nobody thinks that everybody in America should all earn the same amount of money, but clearly there is something very wrong when so few people have so much money, while at the same time, the middle class is shrinking and at the same time poverty in America is growing.

While the richest 1 percent of the population own 37 percent of the wealth in America, we have 18 percent of our workers, people who are working

full time, they are earning poverty wages.

We have 22 percent of our children living in poverty. That is the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world by far. That is double the rate of any other country. And we have at a time that some of our friends are proposing to cut back on WIC and to cut back on food stamps, we have 5 million children in America who are hungry today.

Let's talk about that issue. Tax breaks for the rich increased hunger for children at a time when we have the highest rate of childhood poverty in the industrialized world.

Let me talk about another issue. Our Republican friends talk about the mandate they received on November 8. Let me say a word about that mandate.

What percentage of the people came out to vote in that mandate? Thirty-nine percent of the people came out to vote. Republicans ended up with a smaller percentage, a little bit larger percentage than the Democrats did. Thirty-nine percent of the people came out to vote.

I am happy to say that in my home city of Burlington, VT on election day just this last Tuesday a progressive was elected mayor. We had 50 percent of the people coming out in a local election.

Why is it that so few people participate in the Democratic process in America? Why is it that poor people in America virtually don't vote at all, many working people don't vote at all? And I think the reason is that the people are basically giving up on the political system.

WELFARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nevada [Mr. ENSIGN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. Speaker, since Lyndon Johnson first launched the Great Society programs of the 1960s this country has now spent over \$5 trillion to defeat poverty, a war that we have since lost and lost miserably.

You know, some people around here try to define compassion as how much money we can give to people and how many people we can put on welfare and how many people we can make dependent on a system that has failed that has destroyed the family. That has had crime rate skyrocket over the last 30 years, that has seen out-of-wedlock birth and we need to abandon that system and start over.

Incremental welfare reform will not work. President Clinton said it is time to honor and reward people who work hard and play by the rules. The administration knows that our welfare system is broken.

The people who defend our current welfare system want to keep people, or at least they seem to at least want to keep people in poverty. That can be the

only justification for defending the current welfare system.

We are here and we were sent here to revolutionize the welfare system. It does not work. Government cannot be compassionate by definition because the word compassion means "to suffer with." Only individuals can suffer with other individuals, to offer them a hand up instead of a handout.

Our welfare system was intended to be a safety net in between work. If you happened to get in trouble, there was a safety net. What was intended to be a safety net has now become a hammock that, in time, becomes like a spider web that just entraps people and they cannot get out of it.

When I was campaigning, I would go through and meet different people, and I have a brochure and one of the things in the brochure talked about mandatory work for welfare recipients. Single mothers that I met with, that was the thing that they picked up on almost immediately every time that I met them. Mandatory work for people that are out there struggling, and they know that their tax dollars are going to pay for somebody that could be working, but is not. That is the hallmark of our welfare plan that will be voted on later this month.

You know, our country is a great country. And we have been known to be an opportunity society that has attracted people from around the world. But to continue to keep people in poverty is wrong. It is morally wrong.

This is not a question of economics; this is a question of morality. It is morally wrong to keep people in poverty by making them dependent on a system that they just don't see any way that they can get out of.

I believe that our country needs to become that opportunity society once again. We need to encourage small businesses and jobs, encourage entrepreneurs that are going to get out there and create opportunities for minorities and women and all people. We need to look for economic principles that don't benefit the rich, that don't benefit the middle class or the poor, they benefit all classes of people, young and old, black and white, Hispanic. It does not matter.

We need to have principles that look for situations where all classes of people win. Instead of saying it is the Republicans or the Democrats, we need to put partisanship aside. I have only been here a short time and the partisanship of this place is sickening on committees and on the House floor. We need to put that aside and work for the American people. We were all sent here to solve the problems that a lot of this government has created. We were sent here to solve those problems, and we need to get down to doing the business that the American people sent us here to do.

In conclusion, let me say that I am proud to represent the people of Nevada. They are hard-working people with the work ethic, I think, that is known throughout the West. And be-

cause of that work ethic, they sent me here to get people off of welfare and into work.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. FIELDS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WHITFIELD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WHITFIELD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AND COLLECTION SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. HOYER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, one of the most critical areas in need of reform is our child support enforcement and collection system. Too many absent parents are not meeting their responsibility of emotionally and financially supporting their children.

Bringing children into this world and not supporting them is an irresponsible act and it is wrong. The time has come for us to put an end to this irresponsible behavior.

Those of us who work hard and play by the rules can no longer continue supporting a system in which responsibility is abandoned. Enough is enough.

Americans expect and we need to demand that both parents support their children. We must discourage government dependence and expect every able-bodied American to be personally responsible for their actions. The previous speaker talked about that. This is not a partisan issue. This is a critical issue if America is going to succeed to build a better society for our children and generations to come.

Payment of child support should be as certain as taxes and death. Each year failure to collect child support costs our country billions of dollars and children billions of dollars.

The potential for our child support collection is estimated at around \$48 billion. However, only \$14 billion is actually collected. This leaves an estimated collection gap of \$34 billion per year that parents are not paying to support their children and expecting the rest of us to pick up the slack.

Clearly, we need to take care of those children. But we also need to demand that parents are there first.

Moreover, half of the women eligible for child support are receiving nothing. These statistics send a clear signal that we have got a lot more work to do.